

**He Was Modest as a Hunter, But Had Fought in the Argonne**

# ON PARADISE PEAKS

THE conventional playthings of millionaires did not amuse old man Angus. He had worked with the big fist in his time, and now he would spend with the open hand. But he wanted space for the golden sowing; he wanted to be monarch of all he surveyed.

So he engaged a geologic age for his landscape gardener and bought himself a Titan's share of the Rocky mountains. The water from eternal snows had gnawed canons; tornados had turned sculptor; forests had painted bleak slopes with the blessings of green—in order that old man Angus might have his plaything.

Paradise Peaks he called it, having a fancy for alliteration.

The Manor, set deep in the lodge-pole pine and aspen groves of Clearwater valley, was the heart of the demesne. There old man Angus through the sweet, thrilling months of the mountain summer played grand host to his guests.

He supplied all accessories to adventure, from trout-flies to guns that would slay an elephant. The fifteen hunting lodges scattered over Paradise Peaks, each had its arsenal, its library, its store of liquors, its string of horses and its guides at the disposal of guests.

Old man Angus had a plaything that cannot be matched on this continent. He also had a daughter. There the story really begins.

Columbine, aged twenty, had been everywhere and seen everything—Angus' money had taken care of all that; but her soul belonged to her native west, and she remained simple, wholesome and feminine.

Of course this Columbine had her Pierrot in plumer. That summer there were two of them. One was strongly favored by Angus as future son-in-law. Chandler was what society reporters call an "eligible bachelor," which means that he was nearer forty than thirty. His career had been devoted exclusively to the sporting achievements of the unnecessarily rich.

The other Pierrot, who had followed Columbine to her mountain habitat, fitted into the natural environment, for he was a poet. Columbine had discovered him at the University of Chicago, where she had dabbled in English literature the winter before; and when a few dancing parties at the Quadrangle Club had warmed up a casual classroom acquaintance into something more lively, she had invited him out to pap's principality for a summer's airing. She had been timid in making the suggestion, for he, being a faculty man with some exalted title, moved on a higher academic plane than she could ever hope to reach.

He had accepted her invitation, and with some fishing tackle, an old riding suit and an anthology of Victorian verse in his kit, came to Paradise Peaks to worship nature—and Columbine. He had not suspected that he was pursuing a princess of the continental divide.

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GHENT felt at a loss in the Paradise Peaks crowd. Although it was affable enough, and its wives were pleasantly negative, its talk was not his talk. They were all, like Angus, impressively rich; and also, like John Eustace Chandler, they were apparently adept at every extravagant amusement. They had been all over the map; and he, Rodriguez Ghent, had been nowhere in particular, except to Harvard.

Moreover, he had not brought along his dress suit. He gathered that dinner was a full-dress affair at the Manor, and he would have fled back to civilization and simplicity immediately if the railroad station had not been a hard forty miles of motor-driving away. In a panic he rushed to Columbine for advice, and she calmed his embarrassment with such tactful sympathy and resourcefulness that his adoration of her reached a new summit of ecstasy. She merely said, with her gentlest smile: "Don't worry. I think I can find you what you want."

Then she pressed a button and conferred with an austere major domo. Within a few minutes an equipment of what young Mr. Ghent, in his lighter moments, called "soup-and-fish," was laid out in his room, complete from socks to cuff links. What was more important, the clothes fitted him.

"Am I in the wild west or the Arabian nights?" he asked himself as he studied the perfect fit of somebody else's dress coat across his shoulders.

Before Ghent's coming there had been some teasing of Columbine about her learned and poetic tenderfoot. The badinage had been led, of course, by Mr. Chandler of New York, who knew all the Rocky mountains by their first names.

In the dinner-table talk Ghent was asked if he rode.

"I haven't been on a horse for fifteen years," he answered cheerfully.

Did he like trout fishing?

Ghent, candor itself, did not know, never having tried it. But he liked to fish.

Ah, yes; where did he do his fishing?

Ghent mentioned northern Wisconsin and black bass, but his remarks were received coldly. Bait-casting for black bass, he failed to perceive, was distinctly lower-class. Some one, to save the situation, carelessly referred to a sea trout weighing 421 pounds which he had caught off the Catalina Islands after eleven hours of desperate battle.

Did he shoot?

"Well, yes—in a sort of a way."

What did he fancy in the line of shooting? "Grouse? Wild turkey—deer, elk, bear? They were to be found hereabouts in abundance, and Paradise Peaks knew no game seasons."

Ghent could not specify his choice of wild creatures for killing, and Mr. Chandler saw fit to talk in a large manner about the snow-leopards he had shot in the Himalayas, the summer of 1914, with his friend, Lieut. Col. Apamadoc Jones of the Bengal Lancers. The war had ended big-game shooting. Mr. Chandler continued, but it was beginning again with the coming of peace, and a man

who wanted adventure could now go out and have some sport.

Ghent then knew that his instinct to hate Mr. Chandler was a just and true emotion.

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THE talk of guns and kills ran around the table until Ghent wanted to shriek. He managed to silence the banker at his elbow who was telling of his great massacre of ducks last November on the Bear River marshes in Utah.

"I find as I grow older," said Ghent, with a world-weary air, "that the pleasure of hunting, for its own sake, died out. I have come to believe that a man has a right to kill each day only enough for that day's food."

The man who had spoken of seventeen dozen ducks in one morning's bag thought of eating them all without three meals, and considered himself snubbed as a game-hog.

Then Columbine began to talk of books to Ghent. Kenneth Angus, Columbine's brother, a few years older, who had been wrapped in moodiness, pricked up his ears and joined in their conversation intelligently.

Kenneth, who had been blighted in love while at Yale, was in the habit of wandering from one hunting-lodge to another, with only an old guide for companion.

After dinner Columbine took Ghent out to a corner of the veranda to see what she called her demi-tasse view.

He began to feel lyric and exalted.

Was it because a poem was coming on—or because Columbine, in a platonic sort of way, was letting him hold her hand?

With heavy feet that gave satisfactory warning Angus and Mr. Chandler appeared alongside. Eagle jumped out, and Chandler gave his horse a cut of the quirt. Chandler's bay was thrusting his nose ahead of Eagle's blue muzzle. Eagle resented this and so did Ghent. He spurred him.

It became a wild gallop for half a mile. Chandler was using leather like a jockey, but Ghent merely spoke sweet words of cheer to Eagle and gave him his head.

The road ran along the high shoulder of a hill. Its disappearing turn down a steep slope was close ahead.

Chandler hollered a warning at Ghent and checked the charging gallop of his bay. Ghent vanished.

A quarter of a mile down the hill road he managed to persuade the ramping Eagle that speed was no longer necessary, and turned back.

Columbine had been in fierce pursuit of them, and now she was talking to Chandler like mother.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she was saying. "You know that Eagle is an old cow pony with a reputation to sustain. Mr. Ghent might have been thrown at that turn. You know he can't ride."

"I'm beginning to think he can," muttered Chandler.

A few miles farther on the tireless pointer dog had followed the cavalcade gave tongue in a way that signified a coyote. Old Rip's telescopic eye plucked the coyote out as he squatted among the sagebrush.

"A pretty shot," suggested Rip, and Mr. Chandler plucked out his carbine, dismounted, took careful aim, and fired. A puff of dust flew up near the coyote, and then a yellow streak whizzed over the gray hills.

But Mr. Chandler seized his opportunity.

"You're not catching cold, are you, Mr. Ghent?" he asked fondly.

Ghent felt himself branded as an invalid.

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BRIGHT and early the next morning Columbine sought out Jim Ripley, better known as old Rip, foreman of the guides, to give him certain confidential instructions. For the benefit of the visiting easterners Old Rip dressed himself like the hero of a wild west film; however, he was a simple, gentle soul, master of the craft of mountains and plains.

"Well, Miss Columbine," he said, after she had confided in him, "he must be some tenderfoot, but I'll see that he don't come to no harm. Me and him will just play around quiet like."

"I don't think he is very strong, Jim," she said wistfully, "and I don't want the other men to make fun of him."

"I'll give him Eagle, who's the truest horse in the state, and if there's any laughing to be done it will be my own private picnic," Old Rip promised.

So when Ghent emerged from the Manor after breakfast he was accosted by a friendly old customer who asked if he didn't want to be introduced to his horse, and went down to the stables to meet his fate. He observed that Eagle, a flea-bitten gray with a look of responsibility, had an amiable eye; he listened to a droll lecture upon the habits and character of this particular horse, and with an ease that was surprising in the victim of a hacking cough, he swung up into the saddle.

Three days later old Rip reported: "Don't worry about that tenderfoot of yours, Miss Columbine. I'm learning him fast, and he seems to like it. The firs mornin' I took him out for a five-mile walk on Eagle to break him in. We just rambled over the sage-brush in the front yard, and he asked a million questions. In the afternoon I gave him a whirl at the trout in Willow creek. He's a rotten fly-caster—keeps snapping off the flies and cussin' the man that invented 'em. Says it's a fiddlin' fool sport for silly old prime ministers and heavy swells from Long Island. 'Who wants to keep flippin' a snip of feathers around in a high wind?' he says. The next day we did ten miles and got some action. And yesterday we tore off twenty and climb some mountains. The boy's got pep. Miss Columbine, and he's goin' to be a ridin' fool. He fits into a horse natural-like."

Ghent drew a mental picture of the deer, aimed with designs upon the deer's heart, and fired.

Then came the sound of a falling and a threshing about among the aspens.

"Get him!" Old Rip leaped up. "Good kid."

There was also the sound of another commotion among the aspens, growing more and more distant.

"That's funny," said old Rip. "Did he get up and run? He ought to have done his runnin' first. Never mind; we'll find him."

They went back to the horses and then rode down to find the victim.

There was a deer among the "quakin'" aspens, but it was a doe. Old Rip, breathing strange oaths and lamentations, deduced this story. There had been two deer, buck and doe, brawling among the aspen side by side.

The doe had taken the bullet, and thus brought calamity upon the reputation for woodcraft of Paradise peaks' top guide.

"And now we've got to dress the bride of the phantom buck and pack her into camp," Rip announced, "and that's some job. I've always played on the square with the old man, so back to camp she goes to get us into trouble. Well, she means venison for dinner, anyway."

In spite of Rip's brooding, however, Ghent did not realize the full iniquity of his deed, from a sporting point of view, until dinner time.

Then Mr. Chandler, after describing the sagacity with which he had stalked and killed a fine buck that afternoon, asked accusingly:

"Who shot the doe I saw around in back of the lodge?"

Old man Angus turned black as a thundercloud.

"I killed her," said Ghent calmly.

"Don't be silly, Dad," she retorted sharply. "I can ride there and back again without getting out of the saddle. I want to see Mr. Chandler

get his buck. Besides, I think that Kenneth is up there at the lodge."

"Allright," he growled. "We'll go up there together and chase Kenneth out of the woods."

Old Rip rode with the cavalcade, as it was his duty as chief of guides. The man regularly stationed at Snowdrift and Kenneth's familiar spirit were to be conscripted into the party on arrival.

Ghent made no moan and for the first fifteen miles he satisfied himself and old Rip as a gay cavalier. So Mr. Chandler sprang another plot to ruin him.

The elder Angus was taking things easily an dragging behind. The two hunters, also being men of years, struggled along to keep him company.

Old Rip kept within view. Mr. Chandler was persistently riding with Columbine, and as Eagle was showing a bright and eager spirit Ghent found himself leading the parade.

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SUDDENLY there was a clatter of hoofs behind him, and Mr. Chandler appeared alongside. Eagle jumped out, and Chandler gave his horse a cut of the quirt. Chandler's bay was thrusting his nose ahead of Eagle's blue muzzle. Eagle resented this and so did Ghent.

Ghent showed the note to Kenneth. "She has something up her sleeve," he said after studying it. "We'll row back, get the horses and follow. Well, I guess Chandler will have to admit you're champion in water sports and pastimes. Say, how did you get that scar on your shoulder?"

"Where do you think I was a few years ago?" asked Ghent as he pulled on his shirt.

Ghent was crushed, in spite of Columbine's looks of sympathy. He wondered how soon it would be before he could catch a train for Denver.

"Never mind," said Columbine softly.

"Tomorrow you shall go out and get a buck bigger than Mr. Chandler's."

"I'm through with killing deer," he answered. "I can't stand the look in their eyes when they die."

Mr. Chandler was in great form for the rest of the evening. He could not let the topic of Ghent's doe rest.

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SOME good came out of Mr. Chandler's jocularity. Angus was thereby restored to cheerful frame of mind. Even Columbine seemed to regard Chandler's comic muse with favor, for she told him that she knew where the biggest buck on Paradise Peaks had stamping ground, and that tomorrow they would go out together—without a guide—and get him. He had the finest antlers she had ever seen, she said.

This suggestion caused Angus to beam upon them, and sent Mr. Chandler changed the subject.

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THE lazy hour after luncheon was one of deep and quiet contentment.

"I should like a swim," said Ghent sleepily.

Chandler spoke almost lyrically of the joys of surf-riding at Honolulu, and Ghent was tempted in his youth.

"How wide is this lake?" he asked Columbine.

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Ghent fired from the saddle. The yellow streak collapsed. "THAT'S SHOOTIN'!" shouted Rip.

Then Rip, who was dining with them for democracy prevailed at the hunting lodges—spoke up. He told the story and took the blame upon himself, ending:

"Anyway it was a good shot. He really killed the buck, but the fool got in the way."

Ghent didn't believe a word of it, and told Rip so.

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"Never mind," said Columbine softly.

"It would be nicer if Chandler had clean to clean the fish." Kenneth declared to the distant hills.

Ghent cleaned the fish; Kenneth made the fire and peated the potatoes; Columbine was chief cook, and Mr. Chandler offered suggestions. But it was a successful luncheon.

"Where's that prehistoric buck you went out to get?" Kenneth wanted to know.

"I'm through with killing deer," he answered. "I can't stand the look in their eyes when they die."

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